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NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

OF

POLITICAL REFORM.

REPORT

ON

COMPULSORY EDUCATION,

BY

DEXTER A. HAWKINS.

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Education perpetuates a Free State; decreases pauperism and crime; and doubles the value of the citizen.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

OF THE

New York City Council of Political Reform

UPON

COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

In a Democratic Republic like ours, where all political power resides in and springs from the people; where, to use the language of Abraham Lincoln, "*the government is of the people, for the people, and by the people,*" no subject can be presented to the citizens for their consideration more important than the education of the youth.

UNIVERSAL EDUCATION ESSENTIAL TO FREE GOVERNMENT.

Intelligence in the rulers is essential to good government; with us the rulers are the voters, hence the necessity of fitting them by education to rule. With intelligent voters, our form of government is the best yet devised; but with ignorant voters, it is one of the worst. An intelligent people seek freedom, and an ignorant one despotism, just as naturally and certainly as the needle points to the magnetic pole.

The founders of our free institutions two hundred and fifty years ago saw this, and scarcely had they completed the log cabins for their families, when they began the log school-house for the school and school-master.

The school-house has spread, developed and improved from Maine to California equally with the dwelling-house. It is the nursery of American citizens.

THREE CARDINAL PRINCIPLES OF AMERICAN LIBERTY.

These three cardinal principles our forefathers never lost sight of, viz., a free State, a free School, and a free Church. Self-preservation imposes upon our government the duty of educating the people sufficiently to qualify them to exercise intelligently the right of suffrage. Conscious of this, every free State established a system of free schools.

So great and beneficent has been their influence upon the people, that the material prosperity, intellectual and moral development, respect for law and obedience to it, in each State, may be relatively measured and calculated by the condition of the free public schools.

WHAT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IS DOING FOR EDUCATION.

The National Government has already set aside for educational purposes one hundred and forty millions (140,000,000) of acres of public land; and the question of devoting to education the whole proceeds of the public lands still undisposed of, is discussed. In the last Congress the Committee on Education and Labor in the House of Representatives, reported favorably a bill for this purpose, and after a careful debate and consideration, it passed that body and was sent to the Senate. It has established a Bureau of Education as a permanent part of the Government, with a Commissioner of Education at its head. His annual report is one of the most interesting, instructive, valuable and important documents that issues from the Government press. *Every legislator and every school officer* in the United States should *study its contents and heed its facts.*

MAGNITUDE OF THE SCHOOL INTEREST.

(1.)—*In the Nation.*

We have in the United States over fourteen and a half millions (14,500,000) of children of the school age; we expend annually for schools over ninety-five millions (95,000,000) of dollars which is equal to one-third of one per cent. of the value of the property, real and personal, of the whole country, as returned by the last census; and we employ two hundred and twenty-one thousand (221,000) teachers. This is our standing army, and those are our raw recruits. Their arms are the pen and

the slate pencil; their munitions of war the text-books; their forts and arsenals the school-houses; and the enemy they are enlisted to conquer, ignorance and bigotry. Through the munificence of the Government, the finest building that springs up in every village in our new States and Territories is the public school-house. Like the light of heaven and the water of the earth, it is open and free alike to rich and poor.

(2.)—*In the State of New York.*

In the State of New York we have one million and a half (1,500,000) school children, twenty-eight thousand (28,000) school teachers, twelve thousand (12,000) school-houses, and one million (1,000,000) volumes of books in the school district libraries. The school property of the State is worth twenty-seven millions of dollars ($27,000,000,) and we are expending two million dollars ($2,000,000) a year to add to it and improve it. The law in the State of New York requires us to raise annually one and one-quarter of a mill tax upon each dollar of valuation of taxable property, for the support of the free schools. This amounts to two and a half millions of dollars. But so fully is the value of the schools appreciated that the people voluntarily tax themselves annually four times this amount, making the whole sum spent upon schools in this State ten millions of dollars ($10,000,000) a year.

This is called the "Empire State." So long as we continue this liberal policy of education for the whole people it will remain such.

The canal interest, the railroad interest, the manufacturing interest, important as they are to material progress, are yet small compared with the education of our million and a half of youth.

(3.)—*In the City of New York.*

The city of New York had, last year, over two hundred and thirty thousand (230,000) pupils in its schools. It employed three thousand (3,000) teachers and school officers, and expended upon public education three millions three hundred thousand dollars ($3,300,000.) The citizen, however humble, has only to send his child to the public school, and Government furnishes him, there free of cost, an educational palace, warmed

and lighted, the best text-books and apparatus, and the most skillful teachers.

Stewart and Astor, with their hundred millions of property and no children in the public schools, like true-hearted American citizens, gladly pay the school taxes that educate the sons and daughters of thousands of poor laborers who have no property to be taxed. Aided by the free school, the greatest wealth and the highest honors and offices in this broad land are within the reach of the sons of the humblest workman.

THE PROPERTY SHOULD EDUCATE THE CHILDREN.

The American doctrine is, that "*the property of the State shall educate the children of the State.*" This benefits equally the rich and the poor. It decreases crime, reduces taxes, improves labor, increases the value of property, and elevates the whole community. One of the first and decisive questions asked in seeking a permanent location for one's family is: What are the means provided for education? A village, town or State, with good free schools, is the resort of families; without them it is the home of criminals.

In this city it costs more to support police and police courts to restrain and punish a few thousand criminals, nearly all of whom became such from want of education, than to educate our 230,000 children.

CRIME THE CONSEQUENCE OF IGNORANCE.

In France, from 1867 to 1869, one half the inhabitants could neither read nor write; and this one-half furnished ninety-five per cent. of the persons arrested for crime, and eighty-seven per cent. of those convicted. In other words, an ignorant person, on the average, committed seven times the number of crimes that one not ignorant did.

In the six New England States of our own country only seven per cent. of the inhabitants, above the age of ten years, can neither read nor write, yet eighty per cent. of the crime in those States is committed by this small minority; in other words, a person there without education commits fifty-three times as many crimes as one with education.

In New York and Pennsylvania an ignorant person commits on the average seven times the number of crimes that one who can read and write commits, and in the whole United States

the illiterate person commits ten times the number of crimes that the educated one does.

The above facts are derived from official statistics.

THE SCHOOL THE PREVENTIVE OF CRIME.

We may have supposed that it is the churches rather than the schools that prevent people from becoming criminals, but the facts indicated by statistics collected by government show the contrary.

The kingdom of Bavaria examined this question in 1870. In Upper Bavaria there were 15 churches and 5½ school-houses to each one thousand buildings, and 667 crimes to each one hundred thousand inhabitants. In Upper Franconia the ratio was 5 churches, 7 school-houses and 444 crimes. In Lower Bavaria the ratio was 10 churches and 4½ school-houses and 870 crimes. In the Palatinate the ratio was 4 churches, 11 school-houses and only 425 crimes, or less than one-half. In the Lower Palatinate the ratio was 11 churches, 6 school-houses, and 690 crimes, while in Lower Franconia the ratio was 5 churches, 10 school-houses, and only 384 crimes.

Tabulated for clearness of comparison, it is as follows:

	Per 1,000 Buildings.		Per 100,000 Souls.
	Churches.	School Houses.	Crimes.
Upper Bavaria	15	5½	667
Upper Franconia	5	7	444
Lower Bavaria	10	4½	870
The Palatinate	4	11	425
Lower Palatinate	11	6	690
Lower Franconia	5	10	384

In short, it seems that crime decreases almost in the same ratio that schools increase, while more or less churches seem in Bavaria to produce very little effect upon it.

Those unerring guides of the statesman—statistics—demonstrate that the most economical, effective and powerful pre-

ventive of crime is the free common school. Universal education tends to universal morality.

THE SCHOOL THE PREVENTIVE OF PAUPERISM.

An examination of the statistics of England, Scotland, Ireland, and of the different countries of Europe, indicate that, other things being equal, pauperism is in the inverse ratio of the education of the mass of the people; that is, as education increases, pauperism decreases, and as education decreases, pauperism increases. The same rule holds good in our country.

Taking the three States of Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois for illustration, we find that of the illiterate persons *one in ten is a pauper;* while of the rest of the population only *one in three hundred* is a pauper. In other words, a given number of persons suffered to grow up in ignorance furnish on the average *thirty times as many paupers* as the same persons would if required to get such an education as our free public schools afford. Add to this that they furnish also *ten times the number of criminals,* and the right as well as the duty of Government, as the protector of society, to enforce general education is clear, for it is the plain obligation of Government to protect society against pauperism and crime.

EDUCATION, THEN, SHOULD BE COMPULSORY.

Government should prevent both crime and pauperism by extirpating the cause of each, to wit, ignorance. An educated citizen is of more value to himself, to society, and to the country than an ignorant one.

An examination covering prominent points or centres of labor in twenty States, made three years ago, developed the fact that even such education as our free common schools afford, adds on the average fifty per cent. to the producing capacity of the citizen; while a higher training increases it two or three hundred per cent.

He can do more and better work, from the street scavenger up to the most skilled mechanic, with the same expenditure of time and force, from the mere fact of possessing knowledge.

A well-educated commonwealth, however narrow its borders or poor its soil, soon becomes rich and powerful; while an ignorant one, even under the happiest circumstances of land and sky, falls a prey to anarchy, poverty and despotism.

Government is making ample provision for the secular education of all. Has it not a right, then, *to require all to be educated*, either in the public schools at public expense, or in private schools at private expense? We think it has, and that secular education sufficient for the common affairs of every-day life, and to enable the citizen to vote with intelligence, should be compulsory.

Prussia and many other German States have tried it for years, with the happiest results. It is her vigorous system of compulsory education that in sixty years has raised her from a bankrupt and conquered petty kingdom to the ruling empire of Europe, and made her the seat and home of intelligence, industry and wealth. Boston has had such a law for twenty years, and in the last ten they have reduced truancy from school sixty per cent. New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Michigan have now adopted it. England has given her school boards power to adopt it, and in London they have. The effect is to increase the attendance at school, and decrease the number of juvenile delinquents. The time has arrived to try the experiment in the cities of our State at least, if not in the whole State. This will cause every child to enjoy the benefits of the public school, or of some private school.

Wherever compulsory attendance has been tried long enough to determine its effect, the result has been so satisfactory that it has become a fixed and settled policy. Prussia, Saxony and Democratic Switzerland testify to its excellence. It is in harmony with the true spirit of a Democratic Republic to *require* every citizen to qualify himself for the right of suffrage and for earning an independent living.

The taxpayers who furnish the money to educate *all* the people have a right *to require that all shall be educated*, in order that crime and pauperism, and the public burdens caused by the same may be reduced to a minimum, and the ballot wielded only by intelligent voters.

The ballot, in the hands of a corrupt and ignorant populace, is the torch of the political incendiary; but with an intelligent people is the bulwark of liberty.

"An ounce of preventive is worth a pound of cure." It costs far less to *prevent* crime, pauperism and civil commotions, by

educating the whole people, than it does to *punish* criminals, *support* paupers and *maintain armies* to repress an ignorant and vicious population.

The average daily attendance in this State upon the public schools during the school year is only about one-third of the whole school population; and upon all schools, public and private, it is only about one-half.

The class most in need of school training seldom attend school at all, to wit, those whose parents, through ignorance, poverty, avarice or crime, give them little or no home education. This class can be reached only by the aid of a compulsory and searching statute. Every other remedy has been tried without curing the disease.

By a judicious law, firmly but kindly enforced, compelling attendance during school hours upon some school, either public or private, the streets of our large cities could be cleared of the thousands of youthful vagrants from whose ranks now our army of criminals is almost entirely recruited. Such a law in a single generation would work a moral and intellectual reformation and regeneration of our criminal and pauper classes, and save millions of money in the departments of police, charities and corrections, and largely increase the wealth, influence and producing power of the State.

The wisdom of developing and perfecting our free schools is admitted by the great majority of the community. A small minority oppose them on the ground that their religion is not specially and authoritatively taught therein.

OUR GOVERNMENT CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT TEACH RELIGION.

Our Government cannot give religious education; because while protecting each citizen in the undisturbed enjoyment of his own religion, as a sacred matter between him and his Maker, and thus tolerating all religions, it has none of its own and cannot favor any sect or domination or class.

The whole letter and spirit of the constitution of the United States as well as of the several States, prohibits the establishment either directly or indirectly of a State Religion: or the showing any favor or giving any protection, privileges, or financial support to one religious sect more than to another. *Pro-*

tection to all equally, but support to none, is on this point, the organic law of America.

If the Churches would not interfere with the Government's secular education, but would devote the whole of their strength to giving, in their own places and manner, religious education, they and the Government, though working in different spheres and in different buildings, would act in entire harmony, and would in the end produce the best possible general result. By simply protecting religion, but not teaching it, Government is, as matter of fact, giving the utmost genuine vitality and strength to the religious element:

BUT ONE SECT OPPOSED TO FREE SCHOOLS.

This American doctrine of free non-sectarian schools is substantially accepted and adopted by all religious sects save one. That one, however, is large, enthusiastic, well drilled and ably and powerfully led; and though its members are chiefly of foreign birth, yet, having become citizens, they are entitled to the same voice and rights and privileges as natives are in this matter. The leader of this sect, though a foreign ruler, has ordered the destruction of our free non-sectarian system of popular education, and the substitution of his own system of church or parochial schools, that is schools whose text-books and teachers are selected, appointed and controlled by the Church, though the State may be permitted to pay all the bills. In the city of New York, through State and municipal legislation, the following amounts of money were obtained in the last five years from the public treasury for sectarian institutions, such as churches, church schools, and church charities, viz.:

1869.....	$767,815	of which	this one sect	received	$651,191
1870.....	861,326	"	"	"	711,436
1871.....	634,088	"	"	"	552,718
1872.....	419,849	"	"	"	252,110
1873.....	324,284	"	"	"	306,193
Total 5 yrs.	$3,017,362	"	"	"	$2,473,648

If this is a better system than ours, we should adopt it, for we want the best; but if it is a worse, we should reject it.

THE PAROCHIAL SYSTEM PRODUCES MORE ILLITERATES, PAUPERS AND CRIMINALS THAN OURS.

It has been tried for centuries; and in some countries, as Italy and Spain, under the most favorable auspices, for there this sect has had despotic power, both civil and religious, and so could carry its system out to its highest perfection.

What, then, are its fruits? We may say, its necessary and inevitable fruits? By its fruits it should be judged. They are as follows:

(1.) A highly educated few; but among the masses general ignorance, instead of general enlightenment.

(2.) A low grade of morality.

(3.) A large pauper and criminal class.

(4.) A tendency to despotism and to official selfishness and corruption.

(5.) A lack of national progress and development.

These statements are made, first from a personal knowledge of the facts gained by investigation in those countries—having visited them before they rejected that system, for the purpose of studying this very question; and secondly, they are made from a careful analysis of official statistics.

The fruits of the two systems also exist side by side in our own country.

There are with us five and a half millions of foreign-born inhabitants, the greater portion of whom came from countries as Ireland and England for example, that have had the parochial or church system of schools; hence they may justly be taken *intellectually* and *morally* as the fair average product of that method of education.

Of these the *illiterates* above the age of ten, are fourteen per cent. (.14) of the whole number; the *paupers* are four and one tenth per cent. (041), and the *criminals* one and six-tenths per cent. (.016.)

While on the other hand, in the twenty-one of our States having the American system of non-sectarian free public schools there is a native population of twenty millions. This native population has been educated in this system of schools, and in

like manner may be justly taken, *intellectually* and *morally*, as the fair average product of this method of education.

Of these, the *illiterates* above the age of ten are only three and one-half per cent. (.035) of the whole number; the paupers only one and seven-tenths per cent. (.017), and the criminals only three-fourths of one per cent. (.0075).

In other words, from every ten thousand (10,000) inhabitants the parochial or church system of education turns out fourteen hundred (1,400) illiterates, four hundred and ten (410) paupers, and one hundred and sixty (160) criminals; while the non-sectarian free public school system turns out only three hundred and fifty (350) illiterates, one hundred and seventy (170) paupers, and seventy-five (75) criminals. Or if we take Massachusetts by itself, which has the type or model of our free public school system, with its 1,104,032 native inhabitants, the number is still less, viz., seventy one (71) illiterates, forty-nine (49) paupers, and eleven (11) criminals.

	Illiterates.	Paupers.	Criminals.	Inhabitants.
Parochial school system.....	1,400	410	160 to the	10,000
Public school system in 21 States.....	350	170	75 "	10,000
Public school system in Massachusetts.	71	49	11 "	10,000

That is, we are asked by these friends who have come here and joined us, and whose zeal and energy, if rightly directed, will be of great service both to themselves and the country, to abolish our own well-tried system of education and adopt the one to which they, in their former homes, became accustomed, though that one, on the average, produces *four* times as many illiterates, *two and a half* times as many paupers, and more than *twice* as many criminals as ours. Or if we take Massachusetts as a fair sample of our system, we are asked to adopt one that will give society *twenty* times as many illiterates, *eight* times as many paupers, and *fourteen* times as many criminals.

We cannot do this, and when they come to understand thoroughly the facts they will not wish us to do it; for the welfare of their children is just as dear to them as that of ours is to us, and they, equally with us, desire to diminish ignorance, pauperism and crime, and to make the country of their adoption and the home of their descendants intelligent, prosperous, powerful and happy.

The whole future of our country and the very existence of our free government is wrapped up in the common school. Promote and develope that, and every department of industry and intelligence will flourish like a tree well watered and nourished at its roots. Destroy the common school, and ignorance, poverty, despotism and bigotry will soon pervade the whole land.

Generalizations drawn like the above from the official statistics of twenty-five millions of people are unerring guides. They settle the question as to the comparative excellence of the two systems of education. They are intellectual, industrial and moral beacons, that direct with certainty and safety the statesman and the philanthropist. *They point out unmistakably to the legislator the duty of enacting a law requiring attendance upon schools, during the school age and the school terms, of all the children in the State,* unless legally and for good and sufficient reasons temporarily excused.

The preservation of free government requires this. Protection of society against pauperism and crime demand it. The material developement of our country calls for it. The success and happiness in life of the children of the poor, the ignorant and the vicious can be secured only by such a statute.

Your committee recommend the passage of the following resolution :

Resolved, That the Legislature should enact a law authorizing and empowering the school boards in each city, town and incorporated village to require the attendance at some school, public or private, during the school terms and the school hours of each day, of all children between the ages of eight and fifteen years, unless for good and sufficient reason temporarily excused.

New York, Dec. 30, 1873.

DEXTER A. HAWKINS,

Chairman of Committee on Education of the New York City Council of Political Reform.

At a meeting of the Council, held at their rooms, No. 48 East Twenty-third street, on December 30, 1873, the foregoing Report and Resolution were accepted, adopted and ordered printed, and the thanks of the Council were presented to the Chairman of the Committee.

H. N. BEERS,

Secretary of the New York Council of Political Reform.

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